

# U.S. EMBASSY CITIZEN OUTREACH



Zagreb, Croatia

July 2013 Volume 6 - Issue 1

## A MESSAGE FROM AMBASSADOR KENNETH H. MERTEN



Ambassador Kenneth Merten

**D**ear fellow Americans, it is my great pleasure to introduce myself as the United States Ambassador to Croatia. My family and I are delighted to join you here in Croatia and we look forward to continuing to meet members of the American community as we travel around the country. We at the Embassy are here for you, and I am proud of the work my colleagues in the American Citizens Services Unit do on your behalf.

Robert Neus, our excellent Consular Chief, leads an experienced group of colleagues who, in my observation, are as effective and dedicated as any I have seen in 25 years in the diplomatic service. Nevertheless, if there are ways you believe we might improve our service, we are eager to hear about them, so please don't hesitate to let us know.

Again, it's a great honor for me and my family to be here in Croatia at this historic time. I look forward to meeting as many of you as possible over the coming months.

## FAREWELL TO DEPUTY CHIEF OF MISSION HOYT YEE

**U**.S. Embassy Zagreb will soon be bidding a fond farewell to Deputy Chief of Mission Hoyt Yee, who has concluded a three-year tour in Croatia and will be heading to his next assignment this summer. We all wish him well in his new position, Principal Deputy High Representative in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and are grateful for his tireless support on issues affecting the U.S. citizen community in Croatia during his time here. Citizen Outreach asked DCM Yee to share some parting reflections on his tenure in Croatia during this historically momentous period.

### ***How have you enjoyed your time in Croatia, and what has this time here meant for you?***

I feel fantastically fortunate to have served as a U.S. diplomat in Croatia over the past three years. The work is fascinating and challenging; my colleagues inside and outside of the Embassy are wonderful and my tenure has coincided with an exciting and momentous period in Croatian history. I have been assigned to seven countries as a diplomat; Croatia ranks at the top of my list of "most enjoyable"!

### ***What are some of the developments during your time here that were most important for U.S.-Croatian relations?***

Our bilateral relations have developed into a stronger, more balanced and more mature partnership. U.S.-Croatian security cooperation has intensified, including our joint participation in the International Security Assistance Force in Afghanistan (ISAF) and other NATO-led operations. We also have increased our collaboration in the fight against organized crime and in promoting entrepreneurship and a better business environment, including through establishment of an annual Brown Forum in honor of former Commerce Secretary Ron Brown.

#### **Inside this issue:**

A message from the Ambassador	1
Farewell to Deputy Chief of Mission Hoyt Yee	1
Save the date - Open House	2
American Corner Vukovar Opens	3
Startup Camp Rijeka	3
Brown Forum 2013	4
Croatia Joins the E. U.	5
Consular Corner	6

### ***What developments during your time here have been most important for the U.S. citizen community?***

Croatia's accession to the European Union is in my view the most important development for everyone living and working in Croatia, including Americans. American as well as Croatian businesses and citizens should benefit from the improved access to European markets and products, greater competition and conformity with EU standards.

Continued on page 2

## FAREWELL TO DEPUTY CHIEF OF MISSION HOYT YEE

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

### *Can you discuss one or two achievements you are most proud of from your time here?*

My colleagues and I were fortunate to have participated in several cross-border initiatives to promote reconciliation and commerce among Croatia and its neighbors, including between two nearby towns estranged since the 1990s war – Trebinje, Bosnia-Herzegovina and Dubrovnik, Croatia. I will also cherish the time spent with the teachers and students at the Center for Children with Special Needs, which included a vocational training and recreational program we established in 2011 with the help of a Kirby Foundation Grant from the State Department. Also, it was an honor to join my colleagues in the Consular Section in hosting the 2012 Embassy Open House, where I had the pleasure of meeting so many interesting and friendly U.S. citizens who travelled from all over Croatia to participate in the event (perhaps lured in part by the Twinkies, Oreos and other “authentic” American snacks we provided).



Deputy Chief of Mission  
Hoyt Brian Yee

### *What are the lasting impressions you will take away of the country?*

My lasting impressions will include the wonderful hospitality, humor and athleticism of the people I have met in Croatia, as well the stunning natural beauty of the mountains and coast. The strong “bi-partisan” support of Croatia’s political leaders for a robust and active partnership with the United States in the region and beyond has also impressed me. What Croatia has accomplished in its two decades as an independent state is an example for all countries of what is possible when citizens, their leaders and their partners work resolutely together towards a common goal. Lastly, I will remember with enduring admiration and gratitude the exceptional dedication and talent of my Croatian and American colleagues at the Embassy, including of course the outstanding Consular Section, which I am certain will continue to provide the highest level of service to our valued American citizen community.

## SAVE THE DATE – EMBASSY OPEN HOUSE



### **U.S. Embassy Zagreb tentatively plans to hold its annual Open House for U.S. citizens on Tuesday, September 17.**

The Open House is a unique opportunity for U.S. citizens to meet their fellow Americans in Croatia, strengthening the U.S. community here. Embassy personnel will of course be on hand, including the Consular staff members who provide crucial services, from the issuance of passports to assistance with voter registration and communication regarding Social Security benefits.

**September 17 is Citizenship Day** – or “Constitution Day and Citizenship Day”, by its full legal title. This is a public day of observance in the United States commemorating the anniversary of the signing of the U.S. Constitution on September 17, 1787.

We hope to see you at the Embassy this September, at our own commemoration and celebration of citizenship!



## AMERICAN CORNER VUKOVAR IS OPEN

Ambassador Kenneth Merten, Vukovar Mayor Željko Sabo, and Vukovar Public Library Director Vlatka Surma Szabo opened American Corner Vukovar on March 19. The new Director and her staff conducted a festive opening ceremony, including a square dance performance by Vukovar high school students, an English language demonstration by local preschoolers, an American poetry reading featuring Robert Frost by Vukovar high school and university students, and a guitarist from Slavonia performing American rock standards.

The new American Corner in Vukovar helps Embassy Zagreb achieve its objectives of promoting economic growth and access to American resources for youth, while also using entrepreneurship as a means of bringing together youth in a city whose Croat and Serb students still attend segregated schools. In this context, the American Corner provides Croat and Serb students an excellent opportunity to be in the same space and participate in joint programs, and learn necessary tools to compete in the challenging market of the European Union.

The American Corner at City Library Vukovar presents a central information institution for Vukovar and its vicinity. Apart from traditional library services, it is the first public institution to offer e-readers and iPads to its visitors.



Ambassador Kenneth Merten with the City of Vukovar Mayor Željko Sabo

### American Corner Zagreb

Public Library "Bogdan Ogrizovic", Preradoviceva 5  
10000 Zagreb  
Phone: 01 4810 704

### American Corner Osijek

Public and University Library, Europska  
avenija 24, 31000 Osijek  
Phone: 098 170 6383

### American Corner Vukovar

Public Library Vukovar  
Trg Republike Hrvatske  
1, 32000 Vukovar  
032 450 357

### American Corner Zadar

Public Library Zadar  
Stjepana Radica 11b  
23000 Zadar  
Phone: 091 193 4069

### American Corner Rijeka

University Library  
Dolac 1  
51000 Rijeka  
Phone: 098 794 633

## STARTUP CAMP RIJEKA



On May 20-24, 2013, U.S. Embassy Zagreb and its partners – the Science and Technology Park of the University of Rijeka, the Croatian Independent Software Exporters Association/CISEX, web application firm IT4U, and the Croatian Business Angels Network/CRANE – organized a unique educational and mentorship program with the goal of promoting entrepreneurship and improving the investment climate in Croatia.

Over five days of teambuilding exercises and workshops, 30 young entrepreneurs selected from a competitive pool of regional applicants honed their business plans with the assistance of six mentors distinguished by their extensive experience in the start-up community. The weeklong program culminated in a "Pitch Off," wherein campers were evaluated by seven venture capitalists/

businesspeople. Winning teams Remix Rotation, KAC Binder and LegalTie received iPads as awards.

Participant feedback on the program was highly positive, commenting in particular on the quality of the mentorship relationships. All six mentors were equally enthusiastic about the program and expressed interest in participating in future programs organized by the Embassy.

## BROWN FORUM 2013

The Brown Forum 2013: “Entrepreneurship and Venture Capital – Deepening Ties Between U.S. Firms and Entrepreneurs in Southeast Europe” was held in Zadar, Croatia, on April 8-9, 2013. The Brown Forum brought together regional and U.S. entrepreneurs and venture capitalists to discuss how entrepreneurs can promote economic growth, entrepreneurs’ needs from the public sector in order to break through barriers, how to target investors for good ideas, and how to build the next generation of entrepreneurs.

This two-day event hosted a range of speakers, including welcoming remarks by U.S. Ambassador Kenneth Merten, Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for European and Eurasian Affairs Philip Reeker, Croatian Minister of Entrepreneurship and Crafts Gordan Maras, Croatian Deputy Minister of Foreign and European Affairs Joško Klisović, and President of the Croatian Chamber of Economy Nadan Vidošević. Speakers also included successful entrepreneurs, economists and angel investors. Around 250 participants attended the Forum.



The keynote speaker was venture capitalist Mr. Krishna ‘Kittu’ Kolluri from New Enterprise Associates, whose firm commands over \$12 billion in investments worldwide. The Forum’s program was live streamed to 10 countries, including Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Germany, India, Luxembourg, Serbia, Slovenia, Switzerland, and the United States. The Brown Forum is an annual regional forum focused on economic development in Southeast Europe, named after former U.S. Commerce Secretary Ron Brown, who died in a tragic plane crash in Dubrovnik in 1996.

## EMPOWERED YOUTH IN STEP AFRIKA REGIONAL YOUTH CAMP

A total of 80 high school students from Croatia, Slovenia, Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and Macedonia participated in a one-week program exploring the tradition of “stepping” while building their skills of teamwork, discipline, commitment, and leadership.



Through stepping – a unique African-American art form – Step Afrika brought art and energy to high school students of all ethnic backgrounds. At the end of the five-day camp at the Natural Science School in Zagreb, students and their Step Afrika teachers performed for their community, demonstrating new dance skills and sharing the stage with people of many different cultures, languages, and histories.

As a part of the Camp program, the students were also guests at the Step Afrika performance at Trešnja Theater in Zagreb. As stepping is an unknown artistic form in Croatia, for many people in the audience the performances were the first time they were exposed to such a unique blend of athletic movements, rhythm and artistic expression. Step Afrika’s artists brought tremendous energy onto stage, while telling the history of Step dancing as a part of the African-American cultural landscape and bringing a story of empowerment. Their performance was rewarded by a standing ovation.



## CROATIA JOINS THE EUROPEAN UNION



Vice President Joe Biden

On July 1, 2013, Croatia became the 28th member of the European Union. U.S. Embassy Zagreb congratulates Croatia and its people on this important achievement.

"Today is an occasion to honor Croatia and the many achievements of its citizens," said Secretary of State John Kerry in a statement. "Croatia has worked diligently for over a decade and over many administrations towards the goal of European Union membership. I know it was not always an easy path. I commend Croatia's perseverance and the courage of your leaders and citizens as Croatia has rebuilt its economy and government structures to meet European Union standards."

Vice President Joe Biden also congratulated Croatia upon its EU accession. "Croatia's success was far from inevitable. In fact, it is a testament to the courage of its citizens and leaders who overcame the temptations of ultranationalism and resentment," the Vice President said in an op-ed piece published in the *Financial Times*.

day by day, Croatians kept faith with an ambitious vision and built the opened the doors to Nato and now the EU," he said. "This achievement speaks to the transformative power of the European project guiding countries toward the rule of law, open markets, prosperity and peace."



past is a daily struggle. And, democratic institutions that ment belongs to the Croatian



Secretary of State John Kerry

The Vice President also commended Croatia for its strong support for the EU accession of its neighbors in the region. "We congratulate Croatia and recommit ourselves to the larger goal of welcoming the entire Balkans into a Europe that is whole, free and at peace," he said.

The Embassy notes to U.S. citizens that Croatia's Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs has confirmed that EU accession will not bring any significant changes for U.S. citizens in terms of passport or visa requirements in the country. For more information on entry and residence requirements, please see our website at <http://zagreb.usembassy.gov/service/special-consular-services/legal-issues2.html>.

## INTERNAL REVENUE SERVICE INFORMATION



American citizens living overseas might find *I.R.S. Publication 4732*, "Federal Tax Information for U.S. Taxpayers Living Abroad," useful in trying to navigate U.S. tax requirements. The I.R.S. has developed this brochure as a resource to assist taxpayers in locating useful tax information to help in the preparation of their tax returns and in resolving tax problems. The publication is available at: <http://tinyurl.com/y9p9yyg>

**CONSULAR CORNER**

Telephone: (+385-1) 661-2345

Fax: (+385-1) 665-8933

Email: ZagrebACS@state.gov

**Office Hours**

Monday-Friday, 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. However, please note that appointments are necessary for consular services. Information on making an appointment is available on our website at <http://zagreb.usembassy.gov/service.html>.

For American Citizen Services in the event of an **EMERGENCY**, call: (+385-1) 661-2400

**SMART TRAVELER ENROLLMENT PROGRAM (STEP)**

The Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP) is a free service provided by the U.S. Government to U.S. citizens who are traveling to, or living in, a foreign country.



STEP allows you to enter information about your upcoming trip abroad so that the Department of State can better assist you in an emergency.

STEP also allows Americans residing abroad to get routine information from the nearest U.S. embassy or consulate.

**What Can You Do With STEP?**

- Enter information on your trip or overseas residence
- Subscribe to receive updates on Travel Warnings, Travel Alerts and other information for a particular country

**STEP and Privacy**

The U.S. Department of State is committed to ensuring that any personal information received by our overseas embassies and consulates pursuant to the STEP process, whether in person or otherwise, is safeguarded against unauthorized disclosure. The data that you provided the U.S. Department of State is subject to the provisions of the Privacy Act (5 USC 552a). This means that the U.S. Department of State will not disclose the information you provide us in your STEP application to any third parties unless you have given us written authorization to do so, or unless the disclosure is otherwise permitted by the Privacy Act.

**Contact us**

If you have a question for the U.S. Embassy staff, or an idea for an article in a future edition, write to us at:

ZagrebACS@state.gov

**US Embassy - American Citizens Services**

Ulica Thomasa Jeffersona 2

10010 Zagreb

Phone: (+385-1) 661-2345

We're on the Web!

<http://zagreb.usembassy.gov>